

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 EUR-08 IO-06
L-01 PM-03 DODE-00 INR-05 INRE-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00
ACDA-10 SP-02 ARA-10 PA-01 SY-02 OPR-01 OC-01
CCO-00 A-01 /070 W

-----105585 151724Z /46

O 151600Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9692

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 KINSHASA 4796

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: MOPS, PINS, CG, CASC

SUBJECT: SHABA ATTACK: INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

1. ALTHOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT AT THIS EARLY STAGE TO PREDICT DEVELOPMENTS IN SHABA, WISH TO SHARE WITH DEPARTMENT SOME OF MY INITIAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONCERNS REGARDING WHAT IS HAPPENING THERE AND WHAT MAY LIE AHEAD.

2. WHEREAS WE HAD SOME INITIAL SUSPICIONS THAT KOLWEZI ACTION MIGHT HAVE ENTAILED FAZ UNSURRECTION, THIS NOW SEEMS LESS LIKELY. RATHER, IT APPEARS FAIRLY CLEAR THAT KATANGANS, HAVING LEARNED SOME LESSONS FROM LAST YEAR'S INVASION, HAVE THIS TIME EMPLOYED REVISED TACTICS OF GUERRILLA INFILTRATION TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVE DENIED THEM BEFORE BY GAINING MAJOR CONTROL OF KOLWEZI. IT IS NOT CLEAR TO WHAT EXTENT KOLWEZI TROUBLES MAY HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY KATANGANS ALREADY POSITIONED IN THE CITY OR BY THEIR LOCAL SUPPORTERS. NOR ARE WE YET IN A POSITION TO CONFIRM ALL

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ASPECTS OF THE GOZ'S OFFICIAL SCENARIO--"COLOMBO PLAN"--OR GOZ CHARGES THAT CUBANS WERE PHYSICALLY PRESENT AMONG KATANGAN FORCES WHICH ALLEGEDLY ATTACKED MUTSHATSHA. AT A MINIMUM, HOWEVER, THERE SEEMS TO BE REASONABLE EVIDENCE THAT A GOOD PORTION OF KOLWEZI ATTACKERS ARE KATANGANS WHO INFILTRATED ACROSS ZAIRIAN BORDER.

3. BY PENETRATING KOLWEZI, AND ASSUMING THEY CAN RETAIN CONTROL FOR ANY APPRECIABLE PERIOD OF TIME, KATANGANS GAIN MAJOR MILITARY, POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE. KOLWEZI IS KING-PING OF COPPER INDUSTRY, WITHOUT WHICH ZAIRE'S ALREADY ENFEEBLED ECONOMY CANNOT SURVIVE FOR VERY LONG. THIS IN ITSELF IS POWERFUL BAR-GARINING COUNTER FOR KATANGANS VIS-A-VIS THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. AND THE LONGER THEY CAN RETAIN CONTROL, THE STRONGER THEIR BAR-GAINING POSITION WILL BE.

4. ANOTHER ADVANTAGE IS CONTROL OVER LARGE COMMUNITY OF BELGIANS (OVER 2,000), FRENCH (400), AMERICANS (79), AND OTHER EXPATRIATES IN KOLWEZI, WHO ARE IN EFFECT HOSTAGES. THERE ARE INITIAL INDICATIONS THAT KATANGANS INTEND TO TREAT EXPATRIATES REASBNABLY WELL, AND WE CANNOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT KATANGANS MIGHT AGREE TO THEIR EARLY EVACUATION. BUT IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAT KATANGANS WILL SEEK TO EXPLOIT EXPATRIATES FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. MILITARILY, KATANGANS MAY TRY TO USE EXPATRIATES AS SHIELD, CLAIMING THAT FAZ COUNTER ATTACK WOULD ENDANGER THEIR SAFETY. AT SAME TIME, KATANGANS COULD USE EXPATRIATES TO EXERT PRESSURE ON GOZ VIA LATTERS' RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS. THESE PRESSURES MIGHT RISE SHARPLY IF EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY BEGINS TO SUFFER FROM LACK OF FOOD AND OTHER NECESSITIES, OR FROM MALTREATMENT BY KATANGANS. EXTENT TO WHICH LOCATION OF MOST AMERICANS OUTSIDE OF TOWN WILL PERMIT EVACUATION ATTEMPT IS NOW FOCUS OF OUR ATTENTION.

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5. ADDITIONAL INCURSIONS FARTHER TO THE WEST (MUTSHATSHA, KASAJI) MAY BE DESIGNED TO SECURE ROAD AND RAILROAD SUPPLY LINES TO ANGOLA AND THEREBY STRENGTHEN KATANGANS' ABILITY TO HOLD KOLWEZI. WE CANNOT IGNORE POSSIBULITY THAT KATANGANS MAY ALSO ATTACK IN THE EAST, CLOSER TO LUBUMBASHI. ALL OF THIS WILL STRETCH FAZ'S ABILITY TO DEFEND STRATEGIC POINTS IN SHABA, NOT TO MENTION ITS CAPACITY TO MOUNT COUNTER-OFFENSIVE. WE WILL TRY TO PROVIDE ON ONGOING BASIS OUR BEST ESTIMATES OF FAZ'S CAPABILITIES AS SITUATION EVOLVES. IT APPEARS ALMOST CERTAIN, HOWEVER, THAT MAJOR ADDITIONAL MATERIAL ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING TRANSPORT AND FUEL, WILL BE REQUIRED TO HANDLE THREAT EVEN AT ITS CURRENT LEVEL. TO DATE THE GOZ HAS NOT HAD TIME TO ESTABLISH ITS PRIORITY NEEDS, BUT WE CAN EXPECT TO RECEIVE URGENT REQUESTS IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

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AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 KINSHASA 4796

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6. THERE IS, OF COURSE, THE EVEN MORE SERIOUS QUESTION OF FAZ'S WILL AND ABILITY TO FIGHT, EVEN IF ADEQUATE SUPPLIES CAN BE ASSURED. IN CONTRAST TO LAST YEAR, THERE ARE ALREADY SIZEABLE FAZ FORCES IN SHABA. BUT, AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, THEIR MORALE IS RELATIVELY LOW AND LEADERSHIP DEFICIENCIES PERSIST. IMPLEMENTATION OF FAZ REORGANIZATION PLANS STEMMING FROM LAST YEAR'S INVASION HAS BEEN SLOW AND UNEVEN AT BEST; AND THE RECENT TRIAL, EXECUTIONS AND PURGES OF OFFICERS FROM SHABA AND THE KASAIS HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY HAD AN ADDITIONAL NEGATIVE IMPACT ON FAZ CAPABILITY WHICH IS DIFFCULT TO MEASURE. THESE QUESTIONS, TOO, WE SHALL TRY TO KEEP UNDER CLOSE REVIEW.

7. CERTAINLY A MAJOR CONSIDERATION IS WHETHER THE GOZ CAN COUNT ON HELP FROM ANY FOREIGN GROUND FORCES IF THAT SHOULD BE NEEDED. WE ARE UNABLE FROM HERE TO ASSESS SUCH PROSPECTS, ALTHOUGH A REPEAT OF THE MOROCCAN INTERVENTION OF LAST YEAR STRIKES US AS LESS LIKELY AND WE ARE NOT SURE WHO COULD COME IN IN THEIR PLACE. IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO HAVE

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DEPARTMENT'S ASSESSMENT ON THIS POINT AS PART OF CONTINGENCY PLANNING.

8. WE ARE IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH OUR FRENCH AND BELGIAN COLLEAGUES HERE, ALTHOUGH BOTH THE BELGIAN AMBASSADOR AND DCM ARE CURRENTLY ON LEAVE AND THEY ARE URGENTLY IN NEED OF

STRONGER REPRESENTATION HERE AT THIS CRITICAL TIME. (EMBASSY BRUSSELS MIGHT FIND DISCREET WAY OF MAKING THAT POINT TO GOB.) BOTH GOVERNMENTS WILL BE UNDER STRONG PRESSURE FROM MOBUTU TO HELP. WHILE FRENCH AMBASSADOR ROSS HAS APPARENTLY NOT YET REACHED THE POINT OF MAKING SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS TO PARIS, IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH ME HE HAS EXPRESSED GREAT ANXIETY ABOUT SHABA DEVELOPMENTS AND PESSIMISM THAT SITUATION CAN BE SAVED WITHOUT MAJOR WESTERN ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING THAT OF U.S.

9. AS WE HAVE REPEATEDLY REPORTED, MOBUTU HAS BEEN INCREASINGLY DISILLUSIONED WITH WHAT HE PERCEIVES AS U.S. FAILURE TO SUPPORT AFRICAN MODERATES THREATENED BY CUBAN/SOVIET STRATEGY AND PARTICULARLY OUR COOLING ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS OWN REGIME. WE CAN EXPECT HIM TO PRESS FOR OUR SUPPORT NOW, BOTH POLITICAL AND MATERIAL, IN THE NAME OF ZAIRE'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. A PART OF THIS EFFORT WILL BE TO ESTABLISH EVIDENCE OF DIRECT CUBAN AND SOVIET INVOLVEMENT--AN EFFORT THAT IS ALREADY UNDERWAY. AS THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL, THIS WAS A MAJOR POINT OF DIFFERENCE AND SOURCE OF FRICTION BETWEEN THE GOZ AND US LAST YEAR. MOBUTU WILL OF COURSE ATTACH GREAT IMPORTANCE TO WHAT USG SAYS--OR DOES NOT SAY--IN CURRENT CRISIS. IN LARGER CONTEXT, ALL ASPECTS OF OUR PUBLIC POSTURE WILL BE SCRUTINIZED (AND PROBABLY EXAGGERATED) BY GOZ, ZAIRIAN POPULACE AND KATANGANS AS WELL AS OTHER DISSIDENTS.

10. WE SHOULD ALSO EXPECT PRESSURES TO HELP ZAIRE TO COME
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FROM OTHER AFRICAN MODERATES AS WELL AS FROM THE BELGIANS AND FRENCH. WE SHOULD OF COURSE STAY IN VERY CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE LATTER TWO, AS WELL AS OTHER WESTERN GOVERNMENTS WITH INTERESTS HERE, WITH A VIEW TO DEVELOPING TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE A COMMON ASSESSMENT AND COURSE OF ACTION TOWARD ZAIRE'S CURRENT SECURITY CRISIS--JUST AS WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DO WITH REGARD TO THE ECONOMIC/FINANCIAL CRISIS. TO BE MOST EFFECTIVE, I BELIEVE THESE CONSULTATIONS SHOULD BE HELD AT HIGHER POLITICAL LEVELS IN ADDITION TO OUR ONGOING CONSULTATIONS HERE.

11. ABOVE CONSIDERATIONS ARE DESIGNED ONLY TO FACILITATE DIALOGUE WHICH WILL BE IMPORTANT IN DAYS AHEAD AS WE MOVE INTO WHAT COULD BE EXTREMELY CRITICAL SITUATION. WE WILL BE DEVELOPING SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ON A NUMBER OF THESE POINTS AS SITUATION EVOLVES.

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